



Contact: Helen Beattie, 802.472.5127
Email: hnbeattie@gmail.com

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Bridges to Partnership: Youth and Adults Learning new Skills to Redesign Schools Conference

"The strategies and concepts I learned today will help set the foundation for a powerful change in my school." This was one student's reflection at the close of the October 9th state-wide conference entitled ***Bridges to Partnership: Youth and Adults Learning New Skills to Redesign Schools***. Youth-adult teams from eight Vermont high schools (Milton, Harwood, Twinfield, Blue Mountain, Hazen, U32, Otter Valley, and Williamstown) joined a team representing five New York City high schools, a Lowell, Massachusetts high school alternative program, two faculty from Eagle Rock School in Estes Park, Colorado, and a number of Agency of Education staff to explore simple yet powerful tools to elevate student voice in learning and educational change efforts.

Keynote speaker Dr. Margery Ginsberg defined her framework and emphasized the importance of identifying rigor, relevance, relationships and shared responsibility in our schools. Dr. Ginsberg was the recent recipient the "Relating Research to Practice" national award. Her youth and adult facilitation team shared their expertise in weaving student voice into the process of high school redesign. Teams dispersed to one of three workshops: Data-in-a-Day, Shadowing Students as a Pathway to Partnership or Elevating Student Feedback in Instructional Design.

Participants left this skill-building day having gained valuable tools to jumpstart the implementation of flexible pathways and personalized learning plans, putting students at the center of their learning. Importantly, students themselves will be catalysts for these changes. In the words of one youth participant, "This was a great conference and a way to reach out to others and learn more skills, not just concepts - learning skills is the key to being successful. We understand the concepts, now let's make them happen."

The ***Bridges to Partnership*** conference was organized by the UP for Learning organization (Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning) and the Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together initiative, with funding from the Vermont Agency of Education. For further information, contact Helen Beattie at hnbeattie@gmail.com / 802.472.5127 or go to www.yatst.com.

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